

# Chicago Better Streets for Buses Plan

Chicago Transit Authority  
Chicago Department of Transportation



Better  
Streets  
for Buses







DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT  
Better Streets for Buses Plan for Public Comment  
Spring 2022

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Introduction

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) invite you to help shape the City's first comprehensive framework plan to improve street infrastructure for public bus service: the Better Streets for Buses Plan. This plan will lay the groundwork for ongoing bus infrastructure improvements by establishing a network of corridors to prioritize and a toolbox of street treatments to consider as solutions. Developing a "Better Streets for Buses Plan" is an important part of implementing CDOT's recently published Strategic Plan for Transportation, which sets forth a vision and specific next steps towards achieving greater equity through increased mobility justice. This includes addressing the impacts of decades of decision-making that have created a geography of injustice in cities, where access to opportunity is correlated with where one lives.

In Chicago, communities of color often have unmet travel needs, fewer transportation options, a harsher experience accessing bus stops and rail stations, and endure longer commutes. Public transit, and bus service in particular because of its broader geographic coverage, is a critical transportation option for many of Chicago's historically marginalized communities. As a result, a plan to improve the CTA bus experience is a plan to prioritize the transportation needs of these neighborhoods and their residents. It is by no means the only change needed to achieve mobility justice, but it is an important piece of the puzzle. Making investments in our streets that improve the walk to the bus, the wait at the bus, and the trip on the bus can improve overall economic access for people who most need it. And importantly, such investments show Chicago's bus riders that they are respected, and that the City supports and encourages the decision to take the bus.



Chicago Department of Transportation

## Guiding Values

**Equity:** Leverage our transportation infrastructure to address systemic and historic injustices.

**Safety:** Support freedom from personal harm when traveling.

**Accessibility & Comfort:** Design transportation infrastructure for all ages and abilities.

**Sustainability:** Reduce the burden on the environment from transportation.

## Plan Goals

- Prioritize bus performance and access to transit for people and in places with the highest needs.
- Improve the bus experience for current riders and make it more attractive to prospective riders.
- Establish a citywide framework that guides how CTA and CDOT utilize infrastructure to achieve faster and more reliable bus service, improved access to bus stops, and better bus stops.



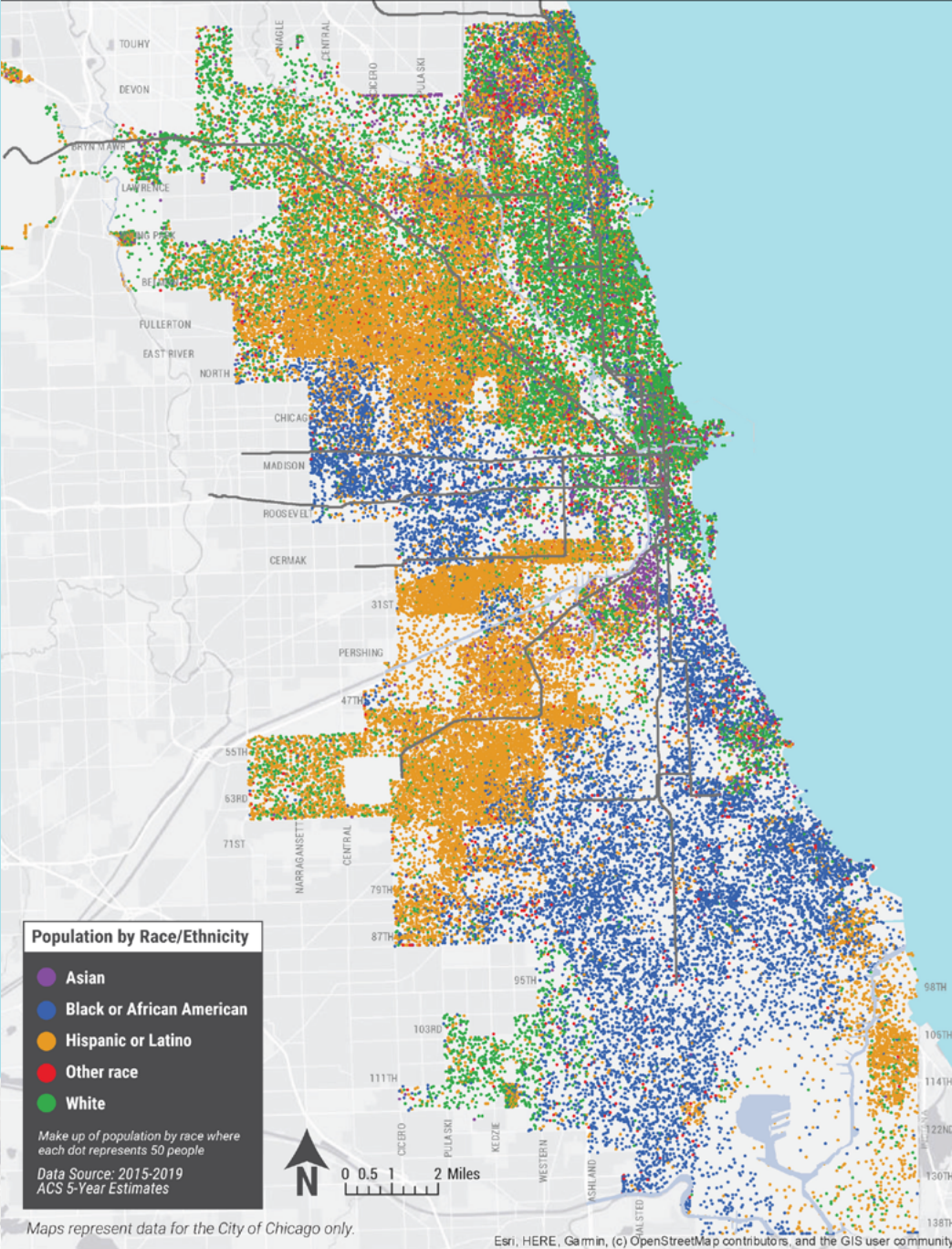
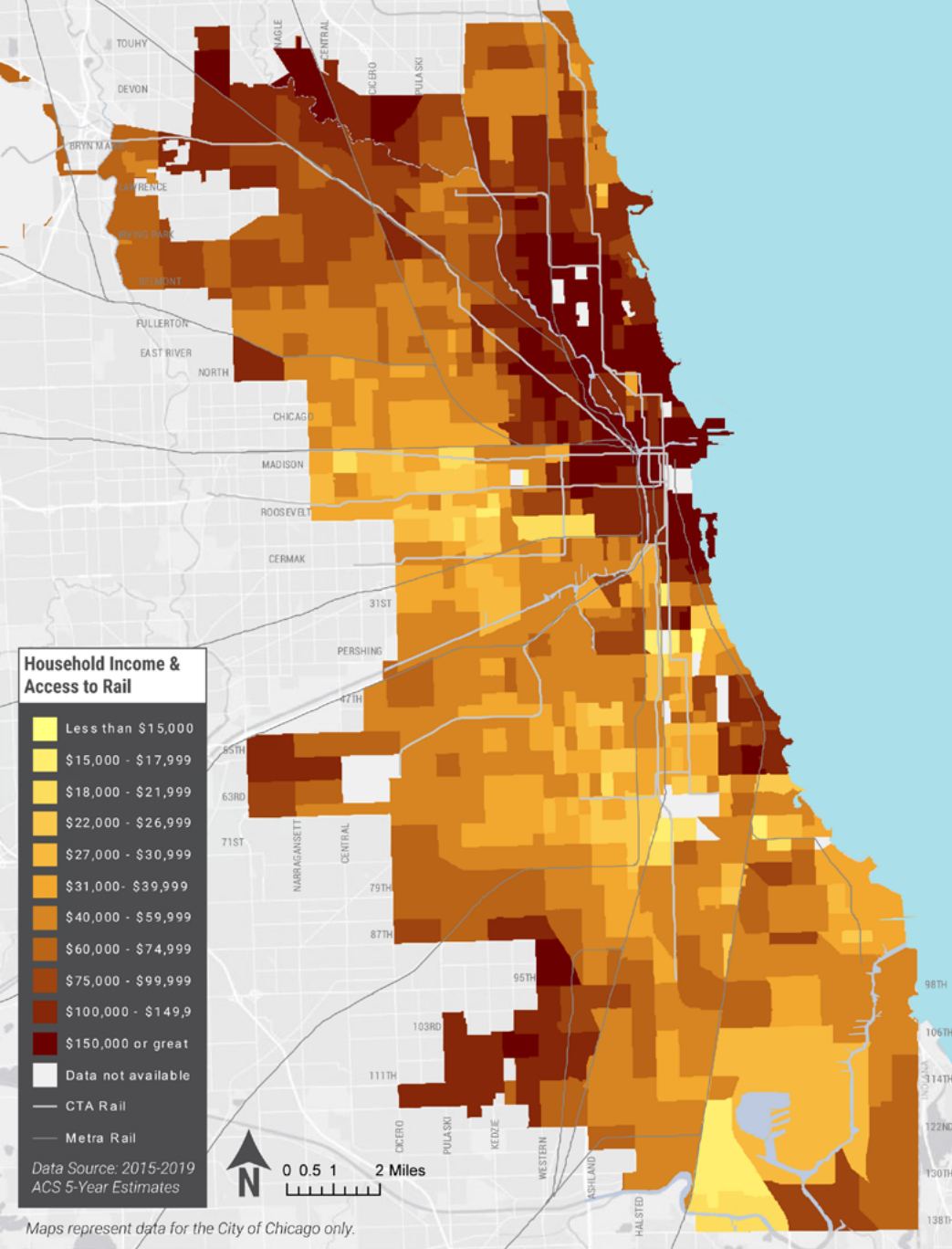
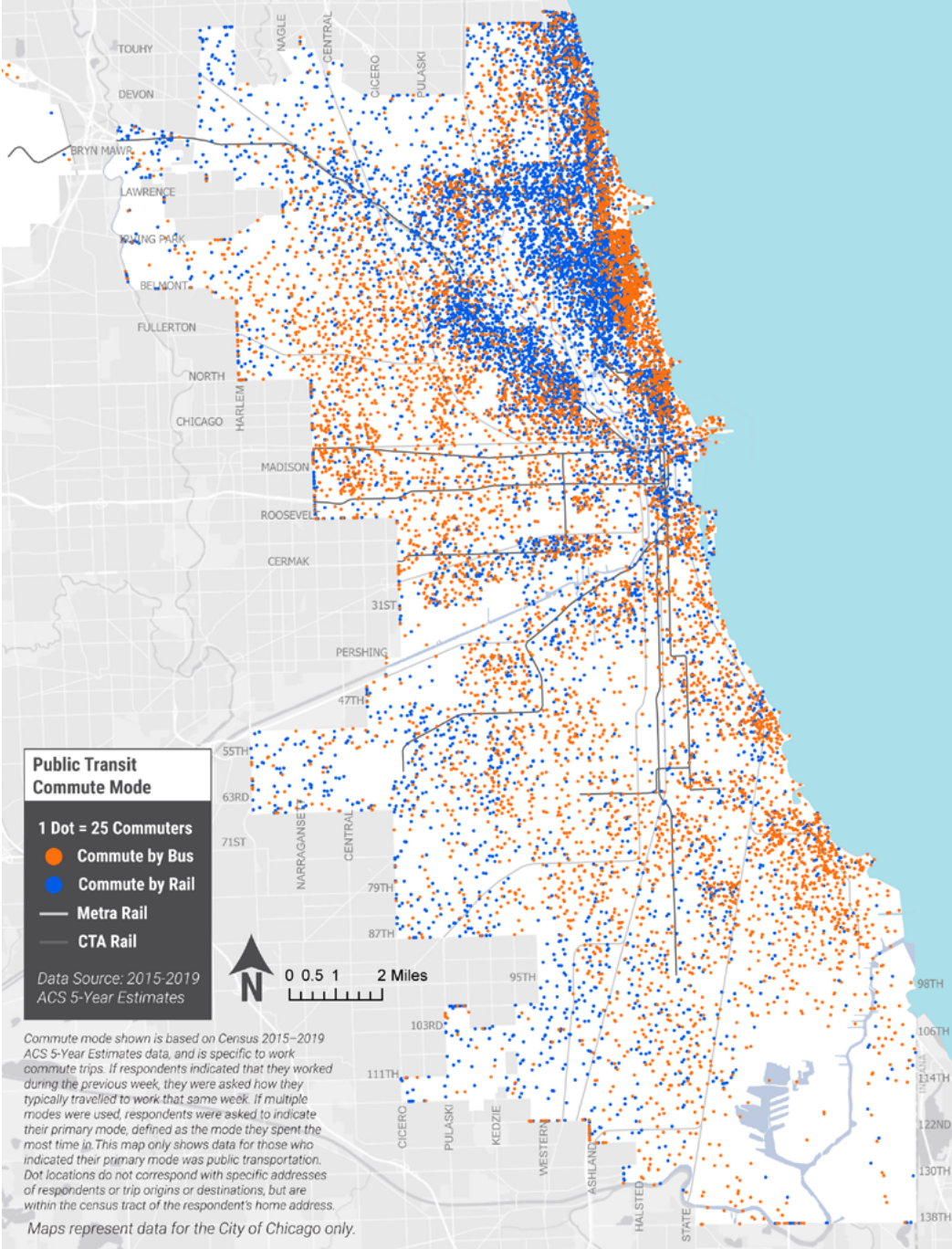
# Why Do Buses Matter?

Put simply, buses matter because the people who ride them matter. In 2019 alone, the CTA supplied more than 237 million bus rides, providing vital connections to Chicagoans of all income levels, and constituting 52% of all CTA ridership that year. CTA bus service is unique in providing accessible, affordable rides to and from almost anywhere in the city, including places far from rail stations. This makes CTA bus service essential to those who cannot drive, walk, roll, bike or scooter to their destinations.

In addition to being a critical tool for providing access to resources and opportunities for populations who need them most, buses make significant contributions to the livability, health, and sustainability of the City of Chicago and the surrounding region. Buses make efficient use of a finite and valuable resource: Chicago street space.

CTA’s standard and articulated buses can comfortably carry 53 and 79 people per bus, respectively. When transit can provide a competitive experience, it can attract people from lower occupancy modes such as personal cars and ride-hail, reducing car dependency and parking demand. A trip taken by bus has a smaller environmental footprint in terms of both health-impacting air pollutants and climate change, compared to cars and ride-hail.

Finally, high quality public transit supports more compact land use patterns that have a range of environmental benefits—conserving land and habitat, reducing impervious surfaces that contribute to water pollution, shortening overall travel distances, and more.



This map shows the distribution of bus and rail commuters throughout the City of Chicago between 2015 and 2019.

These maps show the demographic composition of Chicago between 2015 and 2019. The city is largely segregated by income, race and ethnicity. In developing the Better Streets for Buses Plan, CTA and CDOT will work with stakeholders and the general public to consider relevant transportation equity metrics as the priority network is further refined.



## Buses Are...



### Affordable.

CTA base bus fare is \$2.25 per ride (as of September 2021), regardless of distance or time of day, with reduced or free fares available for eligible groups including seniors, Medicare recipients, people with disabilities, and military personnel. Various pass products can also help reduce the cost to ride for frequent riders, which allow for unlimited rides for 1-, 3-, 7-, or 30-day periods.



### Accessible.

Since 2005, CTA's entire bus fleet has been accessible to people with disabilities. Today's bus models are designed specifically with accessibility in mind, including low-floor designs and ramps that flip outward, rather than steps and complex lift mechanisms that took longer to deploy and were more difficult to maintain.



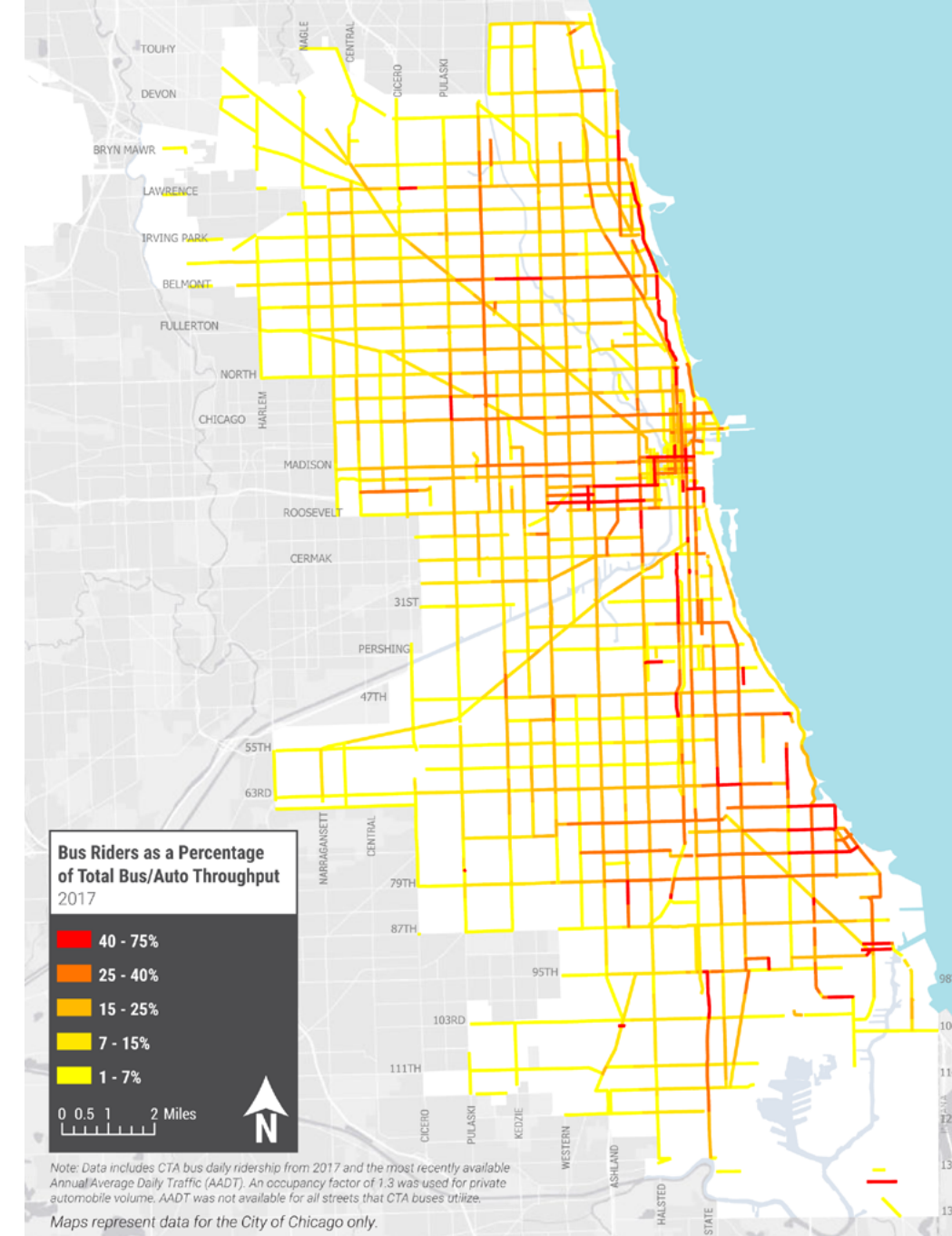
### Everywhere.

For most Chicagoans, the CTA bus is the public transit in their neighborhood. **About 96% of Chicago residents live near CTA bus service**, meaning they are within a half-mile, or about a ten-minute walk of a CTA bus stop. This compares to around 67% of Chicago residents who live similarly close to CTA rail stations, which means that about one-third of Chicagoans live close to buses but far from CTA rail. CTA buses connect more people to rail lines, and they connect neighborhoods to each other, to employment, education, medical services, shopping, entertainment, parks, recreation, and other opportunities.

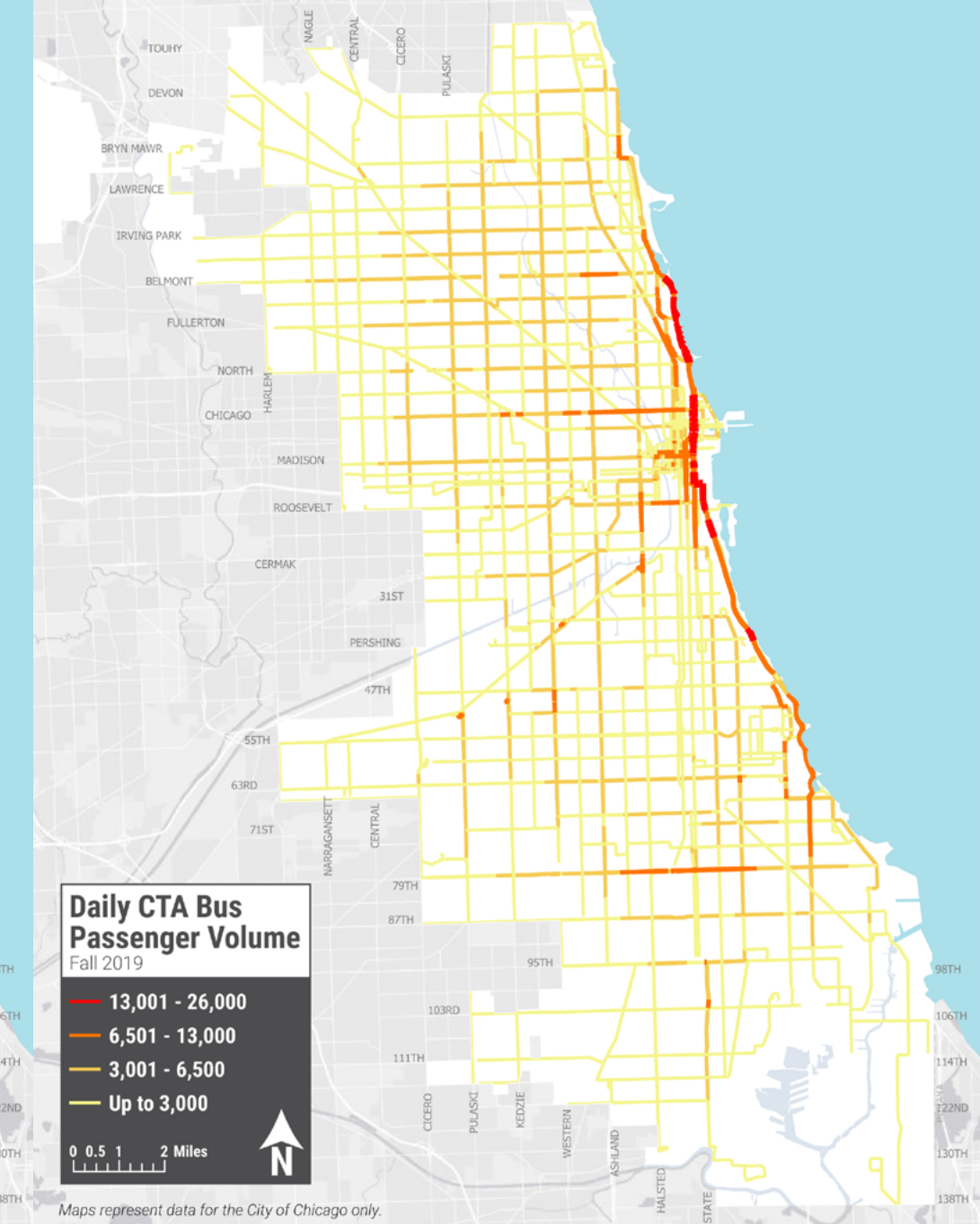
## Why Are We Developing a Better Streets for Buses Plan?

While buses provide vital connections and other benefits citywide, bus travel can be impacted by traffic delays, making some trips slow and inconvenient and causing longer waits between buses. Bus stop conditions, nearby sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings to access a bus stop do not always feel comfortable and safe.

Chicago's bus riders deserve better. This is why CTA and CDOT, in collaboration with Chicago residents, are developing the Better Streets for Buses Plan.



This map shows the proportion of people traveling in buses, as a percentage of the total number of people traveling in motor vehicles (cars and buses), for each street segment.



The map shows a snapshot of how many people typically ride buses across the City. Bus ridership is generally highest (red) along parts of the lakefront and many key arterials.





## Special Focus: CTA Bus and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Public transit ridership declined steeply as a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide and in Chicago. The perception that buses (and trains) were empty during most of 2020 and early 2021 was widespread, but in fact CTA continued to provide hundreds of thousands of bus rides each day. To support essential workers, CTA maintained regular service levels—this facilitated social distancing and also meant that those still riding weren't additionally burdened with longer waits. CTA also maintained rigorous cleaning routines and rolled out initiatives to increase safety, including detailed information about how busy specific buses and trains were at different times of day, communication campaigns about mask wearing and social distancing, and providing masks and hand sanitizer to riders.

Between March 2020 when the pandemic took hold and May 2021 when vaccination became widely available, the level of CTA ridership loss varied by mode, neighborhood, and stage of the pandemic. However, in general, buses retained more riders than rail, with heaviest ridership on the South and West sides. A survey of those riding the bus in May 2020 showed that many were using transit to reach essential jobs, or for essential trips to grocery stores or medical appointments. Many respondents using CTA to get to work indicated they had no other travel option. Riders responding to the survey were more likely to be lower income, more likely to be Black/African American, and less likely to be White, compared to riders surveyed in the years leading up to the pandemic.

As part of its overall response to COVID, CTA adjusted operations to reduce the risk of crowding. This included redeploying articulated buses from lower ridership routes onto routes that were maintaining higher ridership levels, temporarily changing loading standards to limit the number of passengers on board, and reallocating some service to provide additional capacity on routes that retained more riders.

CDOT and CTA also worked together to implement temporary “pop-up” essential bus-only lanes on several miles of two high ridership routes: 79th Street between Cicero and Western Avenues serving the #79 route, and Chicago Avenue between Laramie and Ashland Avenues serving the #66 route. These essential bus lanes were implemented as a bus priority treatment to help improve travel times and increase safety for riders who needed to continue to use transit throughout the pandemic. They provide dedicated space for buses to operate separately from general traffic, in order to help prevent bus delays and bunching, thereby limiting the risk of crowding.

In Spring 2021, CTA ridership levels began to grow again, but what we have learned during the pandemic underscores the importance of bus to mobility justice. The Chicagoans riding the bus during the COVID-19 crisis used CTA buses for their daily needs before the pandemic and will continue to do so long after. Improving the bus to increase economic access and quality of life for these residents is an equity imperative. Furthermore, the long-term need for a successful bus system remains unchanged by the pandemic: to make efficient use of our streets, to enable reductions in climate changing emissions and other air pollutants, and to support the City's overall sustainability and livability.

To read more about CTA's protocols related to keeping riders safe and healthy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, visit [www.transitchicago.com/ready](http://www.transitchicago.com/ready).





## Chapter 2:

# Plan Components and Development

## Plan Components

We anticipate that the final Better Streets for Buses Plan will include two primary components:

### Citywide Network of Corridors

The network of corridors identified as part of the Better Streets for Buses Plan will help guide implementation and prioritization of street treatments to benefit bus riders and improve the bus experience. CTA and CDOT have collaborated to identify a proposed network of streets that could comprise the Better Streets for Buses network, presented later in this document (p.24) and are now seeking input from the public on this proposed network. The proposed network was developed based on technical analysis of corridors with high ridership and slow speeds, as well as consideration of other factors such as the absence of nearby parallel rail lines, frequency of bus routes, geographic completeness, and alignment with the City's Transit-Served Location Ordinance (also known as the TOD or Transit Oriented Development Ordinance).

### Toolbox of Street Treatments

The proposed toolbox is presented in detail later in this document (p.26) and includes ideas like enhanced traffic signals, better bus stops, dedicated bus lanes and more. Some of the bus priority improvements proposed in the toolbox already exist in Chicago as components of bus enhancement projects like Jeffery Jump, Loop Link and Bus Priority Zones (see "Bus Priority Examples" p.38). The Better Streets for Buses Plan will not assign specific street treatments to corridors, but feedback gathered through the outreach process will help refine the toolbox and guide future bus priority improvements citywide.

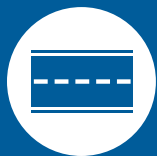


## Definitions



### Bus Priority:

An umbrella term for the variety of street treatments that give some increased degree of priority to bus riders and buses in order to improve travel time, reliability, and/or comfort. For example, dedicating expanded sidewalk space for bus riders waiting at a stop, giving a bus its own lane free of traffic for a segment of its route, or having a traffic signal give a bus a head start ahead of other vehicles are all things that give buses priority and improve the experience of taking the bus. Chicago is one of many cities across the nation and world focusing on bus priority improvements to use streets more efficiently, serve transit riders better, attract new riders and advance transportation equitably and sustainability.



### Street Treatments:

An enhancement to bus operations or the built environment that streamlines bus movement, improves reliability and/or upgrades the experience of accessing the bus.



### Corridor:

An identified set of streets or bus routes that could be prioritized for future street treatments.

## Public Engagement

**Public engagement** is a vital part of the overall effort to develop the Better Streets for Buses Plan. Both the network and the toolbox will be revised and refined based on what we hear from Chicagoans throughout the city. Our goal with this phase of public engagement is to provide information, listen to the needs and aspirations of Chicago's diverse communities, and incorporate what we hear into a final version of the Better Streets for Buses Plan.

CTA and CDOT are committed to understanding the needs and priorities of all Chicagoans, including those who ride the bus and those who do not. We want to know more about how communities use their streets, which streets Chicagoans believe should be the focus for bus priority improvements, and which street treatments make the most sense for Chicago. Synthesizing this feedback and using it to inform the final version of the Better Streets for Buses Plan will help ensure that it is the right plan for Chicago, and lay the foundation for successful implementation and a better transportation system.

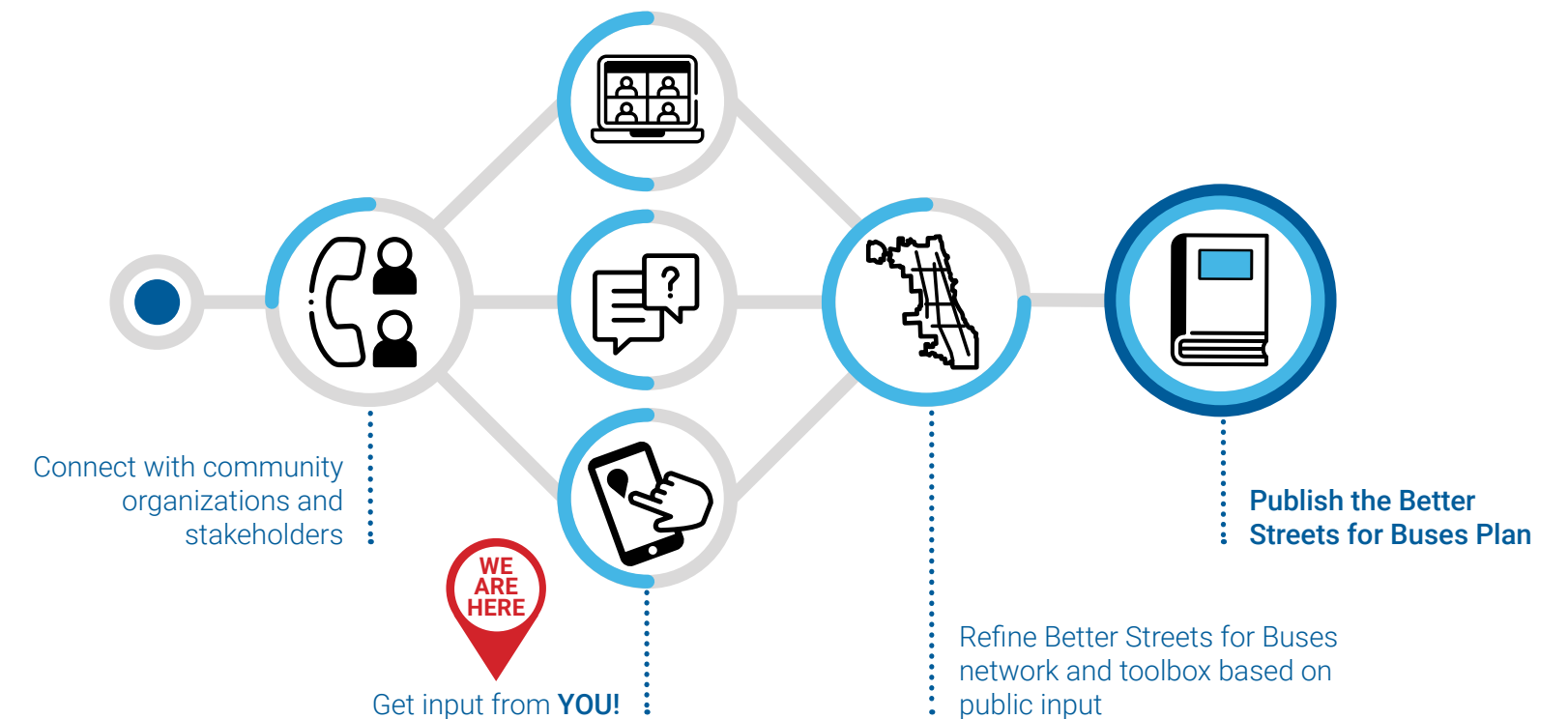
As more specific proposals and designs for bus priority street treatments are developed, solutions will need to be tailored appropriately to each community and each neighborhood block.

Additional stakeholder engagement, to gather additional information about a specific corridor and vet any proposed designs that significantly affect the use of the street, would take place as part of a future planning phase before changes are finalized or implemented.

## Plan Development Process

CTA and CDOT recognize that the success of the Better Streets for Buses Plan rests upon broad community support. The agencies are striving to achieve meaningful and inclusive engagement throughout the plan's development to ensure it reflects the best vision for Chicago. CTA and CDOT have identified a proposed set of corridors for the Better Streets for Buses network and a proposed set of street treatments for the toolbox. The agencies have started connecting with community organizations and stakeholders across the City to get their feedback on the plan components and recommendations for public outreach.

**Now, CTA and CDOT want to know which corridors you think are most important for buses and bus riders, how you are using the street, what priorities and ideas you have, and what you think of the proposed network and toolbox.** Following this period of public engagement, CTA and CDOT will refine the network and toolbox based upon feedback received, conduct additional public outreach to follow-up, and finalize the Better Streets for Buses Plan.



Learn more and share your input! Visit [betterstreetsforbuses.com](https://betterstreetsforbuses.com).



# Get Involved!

There are numerous ways to get involved in shaping the Better Streets for Buses Plan. The best place to learn about the plan and provide feedback is through the project’s highly interactive website: **betterstreetsforbuses.com**, where you can provide feedback directly through interactive maps, take a survey, find information about virtual public meetings, download project documents, and more.

To keep tabs on Better Streets for Buses’ progress and receive notifications of virtual public meetings, sign up for the project email list by sending an email to [betterstreetsforbuses@transitchicago.com](mailto:betterstreetsforbuses@transitchicago.com) letting us know you would like to be added. If you are not able or prefer not to use the internet, you can also call 1-888-YOUR-CTA to be put in touch with someone from the project team to tell you more about the project and record any comments you have.

Watch the project video

Provide comments on the network and toolbox

Share information specific to streets in your community or the bus routes you take

Learn more about bus planning in Chicago

Attend a virtual public meeting



Learn more and share your input! Visit [betterstreetsforbuses.com](http://betterstreetsforbuses.com).



## Chapter 3: The CTA Bus Experience





**Better Streets for Buses can leverage infrastructure to address comfort, travel time, and reliability to improve the CTA bus experience. With these types of investments, the decision to take the bus can be the travel mode of choice for more people, more often.**

## The CTA Bus Experience



### Deciding to Ride the Bus

Trip Start



#### Traveling to the Bus Stop:

Creating safer street crossings and ensuring well-maintained and ADA-compliant sidewalks can improve access between the bus stop and destinations.



#### Waiting for the Bus:

Implementing bus priority street treatments that help reduce service delays can make wait times at bus stops more consistent. Adding more amenities to bus stops can improve the overall wait experience too.



#### Boarding the Bus:

Ensuring sufficient and ADA-compliant space at stops and designing stops to minimize conflicts with other street or sidewalk uses can improve the boarding experience.



#### Traveling on the Bus:

Implementing bus priority street treatments that increase bus travel speeds and help reduce service delays can make bus trips faster and make bus travel times more consistent.



#### Getting off the Bus:

Ensuring sufficient and ADA-compliant space at stops and designing stops to minimize conflicts with other street or sidewalk uses can improve the experience of getting off the bus.

Trip End



#### Traveling to the Destination:

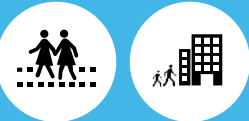
Creating safer street crossings and ensuring well-maintained and ADA-compliant sidewalks can improve access between the bus stop and destinations.

Other things people consider when choosing to take a CTA bus trip include proximity and directness of the route, bus service hours of operations, frequency of bus service, cost and availability of other options, and bus fares and transfer policies. Feedback on these other aspects of choosing and riding the bus is also welcome, and can inform other CTA efforts, some of which are described in the “Concurrent Bus Improvement Initiatives” section (p.49).





## Getting to and from the Bus



Ensuring safe and comfortable access to and from CTA bus stops is often overlooked but is fundamental in making the bus a viable and attractive option. If the walk is too far, too unpleasant, or feels unsafe for any reason, the overall experience of riding the bus becomes negative.

In Chicago, accessing the nearest bus stop typically means traveling a half-mile or less. CTA runs 127 bus routes in the City of Chicago, along more than 800 miles of streets serving nearly 10,000 bus stops. Bus stops are typically spaced between 1/8 and 1/4 of a mile apart along a route. As a result, about 96% of Chicago residents live within a half-mile walk of a CTA bus stop and most live even closer. However, not all experiences accessing bus stops are equal even when access distances are the same. Ideally, accessing or departing a bus stop should feel safe, comfortable, and even pleasant. Though the reality of viaducts, narrow sidewalks along busy streets, long crosswalks across busy streets, inadequate resources for maintenance, and gaps in sidewalk ramps present challenges that are unequally distributed across the City.

To help address the disparity, CDOT’s new Strategic Plan for Transportation includes an explicit goal to make it safer and easier to walk in Chicago and commits to focusing efforts on the locations where pedestrians face the most risk, taking equity into account. To meet this goal, CDOT intends to improve the condition and accessibility of existing sidewalks, provide sidewalks where they are missing, and install or enhance crosswalks and curb ramps near transit stops.



## The CTA Bus Experience







## Waiting for and Boarding the Bus

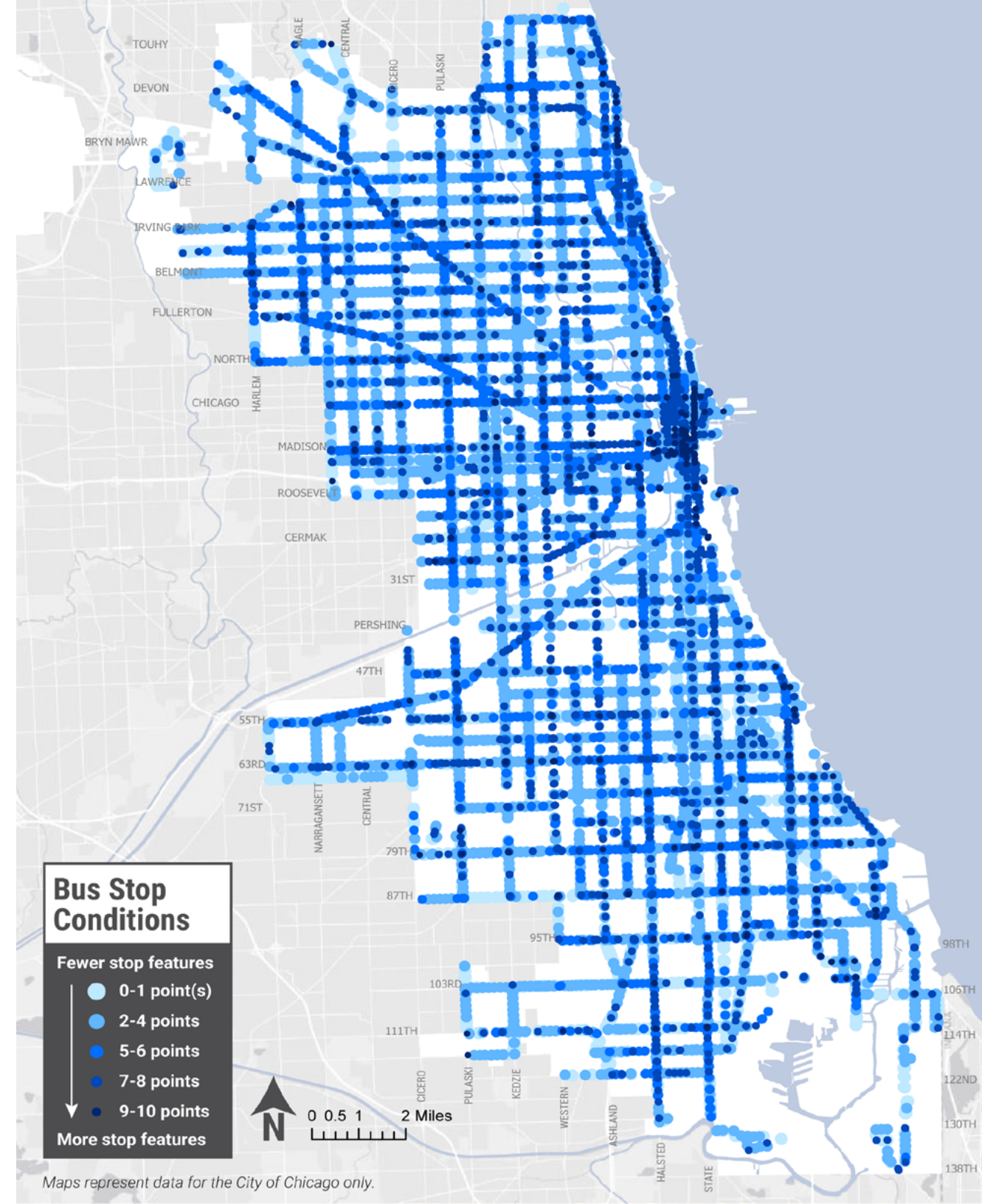


Waiting for the bus tends to be everyone's least favorite part of their trip. In fact, research shows that people perceive waiting for the bus as 20% longer compared to actual wait time<sup>1</sup>. Bus stop conditions can make the experience of waiting for the bus better or worse. Typical bus stop amenities include:

- Shelters, which typically include seating, can make waiting in poor weather conditions more comfortable. Currently, 21% of CTA bus stops in the City of Chicago have shelters. Most of these shelters are provided and maintained by a private contractor, managed by the City.
- Installation of concrete pads in the roadway in the area where a bus stops helps prevent deterioration of the roadway and the bumpy ride, pooling water, and potholes that come with it. About 32% of the city's bus stops currently have concrete pads.
- The availability of accurate real-time arrival information can reduce anxiety that customers feel while waiting for the bus. As noted, people tend to perceive waiting for the bus longer than actual wait time.

Real-time arrival information eliminates this distortion of perceived wait time<sup>2</sup>. Bus Tracker information is available through CTA's website ([ctabustracker.com](http://ctabustracker.com)), the Ventra app, and a number of other third-party apps. Around 17% of Chicago bus stops with shelters are equipped with CTA Bus Tracker signs, to make it easy and obvious for anyone—regardless of what devices or apps they have or how familiar they are with the system—to see when the bus is coming.

While all of CTA's buses are fully accessible, with the ability to deploy a ramp for wheelchair boarding, currently about 14% of all bus stops in the City of Chicago have sidewalk conditions at the stop that make it challenging to deploy ramps. Roughly 75% of these problematic stops require a concrete sidewalk pad to facilitate ramp deployment. The remaining stops have other issues—the area for ramp deployment may be too narrow, uneven, or constrained by other infrastructure. The map on p.19 shows how overall bus stop quality compares across the city, based on accessibility and presence of shelters, CTA Bus Tracker signs, and concrete bus pads.



## Bus Stop Conditions

Bus stop conditions were assessed using a point system that indexes various features that contribute to overall bus stop quality. Points were assigned as follows:

- Sufficient clear space for ramp deployment: 4 points
- Shelter: 3 points
- Bus Tracker (real time arrival info) display: 2 points
- Concrete bus pad: 1 point

Other features such as benches and nearby curb ramps also contribute to overall stop quality, but were not included because complete data for all bus stops was not available.





## Waiting for and Boarding the Bus



Infrastructure at bus stops can also help alleviate personal safety concerns. While the presence of other riders and pedestrian activity may be most important to creating a sense of security with respect to crime, having good lighting and cameras can also help. Infrastructure and street design can also help reduce traffic-related injuries. Combined with calming traffic, providing adequate space for bus stops puts more distance between people and moving traffic, making the wait safer and more comfortable.

Regardless of bus stop conditions, no one wants to wait a long time for a bus. Research and surveys consistently show that high frequency service, which means shorter wait times, is a top priority for bus rider satisfaction, and an important consideration to make the bus an attractive option to prospective customers. Service frequency is not explicitly within the scope of the Better Streets for Buses because it is mainly a function of CTA's schedules, rather than street design. However, some street treatments in the Better Streets for Buses toolbox can help keep buses more reliably on schedule—helping to prevent bus bunching and big gaps between buses that can happen because of unpredictable conditions, including traffic congestion.

Compared to other US cities, Chicago has relatively frequent bus service regardless of time of day or day of the week. Currently, 20 major CTA bus routes run every 2-8 minutes during the weekday peak hour and at least every 12 minutes in the midday. CTA has also designated a network of 44 “key routes” that cover the city. Key routes are typically spaced one mile apart and have frequencies of at least every 10 minutes during the weekday peak and at least every 15 minutes in the midday. But even the most frequent routes tend to be less frequent in the late evening or on weekends, which diminishes their attractiveness compared to other options. CTA's established service standards, which account for ridership demand and set minimum levels of service, guide decisions about a route's frequency. CTA's overall service levels are ultimately determined by its available operating budget, which is governed by state statute and regional regulatory authorities and is affected primarily by fare revenue and sales tax receipts. Service levels are also impacted by CTA's ability to invest capital dollars in sufficient fleet and support facilities. More information on CTA's annual budgeting process can be found at [www.transitchicago.com/finance](http://www.transitchicago.com/finance).

## Riding the Bus



The quality of the experience of riding the bus is a combination of conditions on the bus that make the ride more or less comfortable and pleasant, and the degree to which the bus is operating in a way that is getting you where you want to go, and on time. The various factors that feed into this experience are described in more detail below.

### Speed

One of the most common complaints that people have about the bus is that it is slow. The map of bus speeds on p.23 gives a snapshot of how fast (or slow) buses move throughout the city, but bus speeds also vary based on time of day, day of the week, traffic conditions, and weather. Typically, the downtown area experiences the lowest bus speeds, and the morning and evening rush hour periods are the slowest and most variable times to travel. But congestion and other delays can affect buses at other times of day and in other parts of the city.

### Reliability, Bunching, and Service Gaps

Bus service “reliability” refers to the degree to which the bus is able to stick to its regular schedule, arriving at consistent frequencies without bunching or big gaps between buses, and whether or not travel time on the bus is consistent. In addition to speed, reliability is another primary concern for bus riders, because it helps determine not just the overall travel time, but the extra time that needs to be planned into a trip to account for variability. If for example, on most days a particular bus trip takes 20 minutes, but you know it can sometimes take 30 minutes, you may feel you have to build in an additional 10 minutes, and leave earlier, just in case. Consistent and relatively competitive travel times are fundamental to provide current riders with a good CTA bus experience and important for attracting prospective riders.

Poor reliability can be experienced as variable travel times for the same trip while on board, but also results in two common types of disruptions that affect wait times: bus bunching and big gaps in service. Bus bunching is when several buses cluster together along a route and arrive at bus stops at or about the same time. For example, a route that is scheduled to have one bus come once every five minutes may instead have two buses bunched together that arrive at stops at the same time because the first bus was delayed, and the following bus has caught up to it.

## What Street Conditions Can Contribute to Bus Delays?

Buses are typically delayed by traffic congestion caused by too many vehicles for the available road space and intersection capacity.

Additional factors that can make traffic congestion worse and sometimes disproportionately impact bus travel times and reliability include:

- Roadway bottlenecks, such as where two lanes narrow to one at a highway or rail overpass,
- Non-compliance with traffic laws, especially double-parking, blocking bus stops, or “blocking-the-box” at signalized intersections,
- Partial or full street closures due to construction or special events,
- Crashes and related emergency response activities, and
- Obsolete signal technology and signal timing.



## Onboard Personal Safety and Vehicle Cleanliness

Surveys show that personal safety while on board and cleanliness of vehicle interiors are also top of mind for bus riders. These aspects of the bus riding experience are very important, and comments and suggestions are welcome, but they also fall outside the scope of the Better Streets for Buses Plan. You can learn more about CTA's cleaning protocol and safety campaigns at [www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/cleaning](http://www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/cleaning) and [www.transitchicago.com/safety](http://www.transitchicago.com/safety), respectively.

You can also read about additional protocols related to keeping riders safe and healthy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic at [www.transitchicago.com/ready](http://www.transitchicago.com/ready).

## Riding the Bus



When bus bunching occurs, big gaps in service are often created. If two buses that were scheduled to come five minutes apart have bunched together, that means there may now be a 10-minute gap between buses created, and wait times get longer for some riders. There is no single cause of bus bunching and big gaps, but any significant delay to one bus on a route can potentially trigger both. This also means the number of people waiting to board at the next bus stop may grow because of the delay. Uneven passenger loads between the first bus and the followers can result. This can create a downward spiral of reliability; boarding times will increase for the first bus, further contributing to more delay, more bunched buses and bigger gaps.

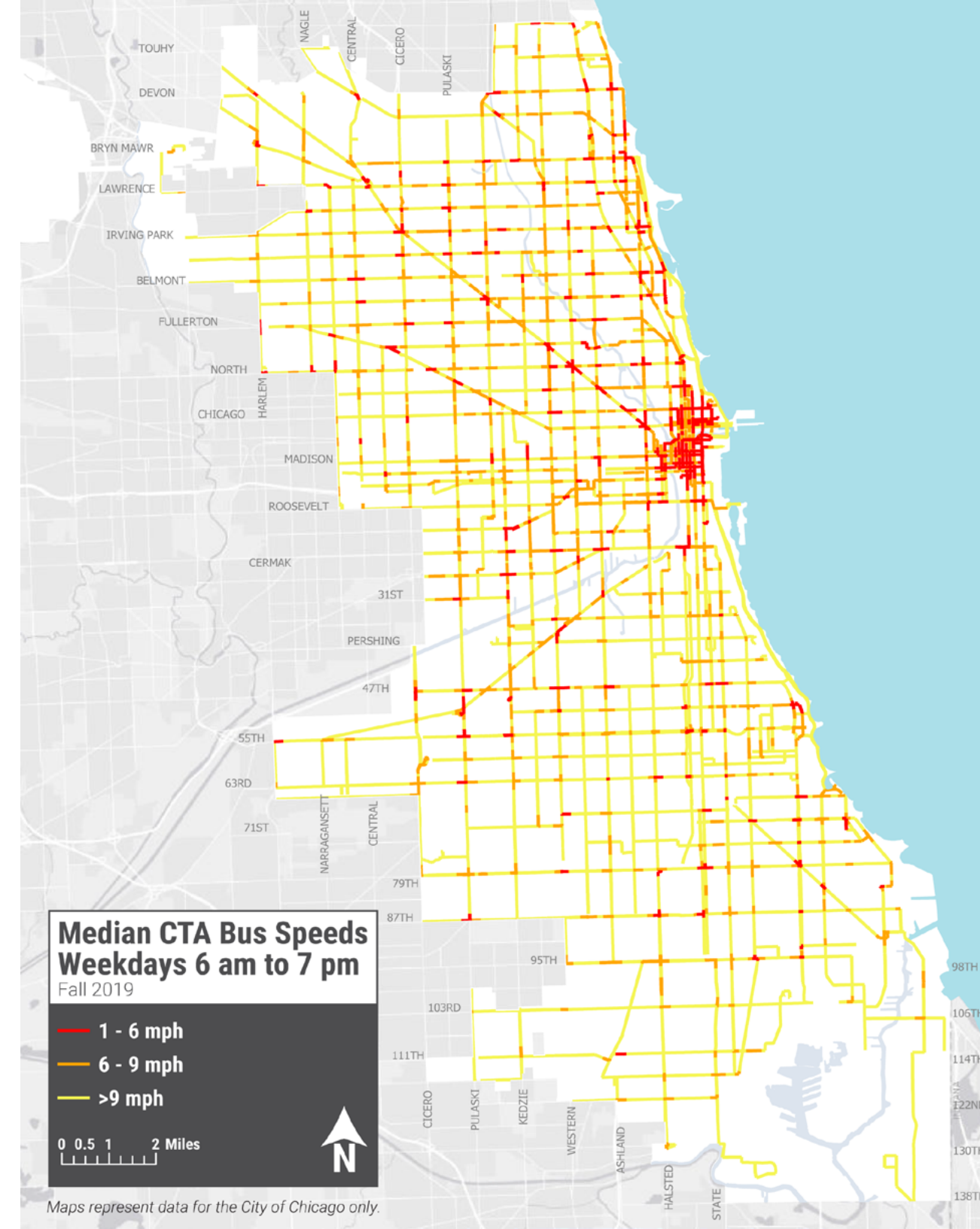


### Crowding

In 2019, about 2% of all CTA bus trips were crowded, defined as carrying more than 53 riders on a standard (40-foot) bus or more than 79 riders on an articulated (60-foot) bus. That same year, about 4% of peak period bus trips were crowded. When a route is chronically crowded, CTA seeks to reallocate some service from a less crowded route. Certain bus priority treatments can also help prevent or mitigate crowding by allowing buses to stay on schedule despite variable traffic conditions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, crowding has lessened, but the ability to social distance has become more important. CTA has an online dashboard to help riders know when specific bus routes tend to be most and least crowded, available at [www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/dashboard](http://www.transitchicago.com/coronavirus/dashboard). The street treatments proposed in the Better Streets for Buses toolbox can mitigate some, but not all, operational and traffic congestion issues that delay buses and contribute to all of the issues described above. These tools are explained more on pages 30-33. Several other strategies and initiatives to address other aspects of bus delay and bus service are discussed in the "Other Strategies" (p.36) and "Concurrent Bus Improvement Initiative Projects" (p.47) section.

## Existing Bus Speeds

This map shows a snapshot of bus speeds across the city. Bus speeds are generally slowest (red) downtown and along parts of the lakefront, but also slow at many major intersections across the city.



Maps represent data for the City of Chicago only.





Chapter 4:

# Proposed Better Streets for Buses Network

## Proposed Better Streets for Buses Network

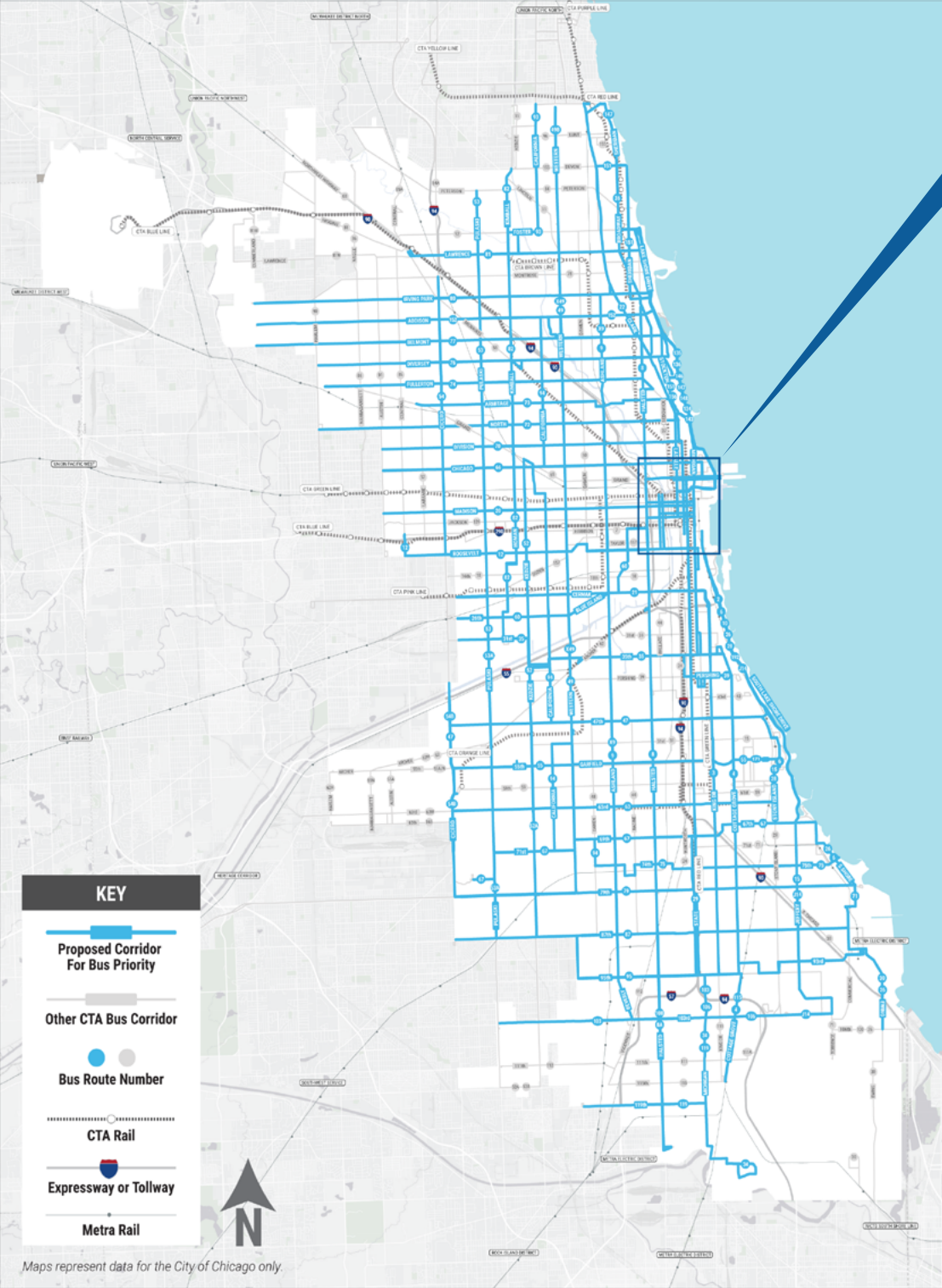
CTA and CDOT have identified 45 neighborhood corridors and 16 downtown corridors in the Loop as part of the proposed Better Streets for Buses network; these corridors are shown in light blue in the map on the next page. The proposed network was developed based on technical analysis of corridors with high ridership and slow speeds, as well as consideration of other factors such as the presence of nearby parallel rail lines, frequency of bus routes, geographic completeness, and alignment with the City's Transit-Served Location Ordinance (also known as the TOD or Transit Oriented Development Ordinance).

If a corridor is identified in the Better Streets for Buses Plan, it means that CTA and CDOT will aim to make that street work as well as possible for bus riders, while still considering the needs of other users. CTA and CDOT may recommend future changes to the street's infrastructure and layout to improve bus performance and the bus rider experience. However, no specific infrastructure changes will be designed as part of the Better Streets for Buses planning process. Decisions as to where to focus improvements and how to prioritize routes will be informed by feedback gathered as part of the Better Streets for Buses public outreach, as well as data analysis and assessment of feasibility. Additional public and stakeholder engagement to vet any proposed designs would take place as part of a future planning phase before any changes that would significantly affect the use of the street would be implemented. Finally, it is important to note that some of the street treatments included in the toolbox may be implemented on corridors that are not included in the BSB network—in particular, this applies to the tools that improve the pedestrian experience, such as an improved street crossing, or are needed to maintain good stop condition, such as a concrete bus pad.

Read more about the implementation of the Better Streets for Buses Plan in the "Next Steps and Implementation" section (p.48).







Downtown Chicago



We Want Your Feedback!

At this time, CTA and CDOT want to know what you think of the proposed priority network.

- Which corridors should definitely be included?
- Are there corridors that are not part of the proposed network, that should be added?
- Are there corridors included in the proposed network that should be removed?

Proposed Better Streets for Buses Corridors

Neighborhood Corridors and Associated Routes

CORRIDORS	ROUTES
35th	35
47th	47
55th/Garfield	55
63rd	63
67th/69th/71st	67
75th	75
79th	79
87th	87
95th	95
103rd	103/106
Addison	152
Armitage	73
Ashland	9/X9
Belmont	77
Blue Island/26th	60
Broadway	36
California	93/94
Cermak	21
Chicago Avenue	66
Cicero	54/54B
Clark	22
Cottage Grove/Michigan	4
Diversey	76
Division	70

CORRIDORS	ROUTES
Fullerton	74
Halsted	8/8A/108
Irving Park	80
Jeffery	J14/15
Kedzie	52/52A
Kimball/Homan	82
King Drive	3
Lawrence	81
Madison	20
Michigan	34/119
North Avenue	72
N. DuSable Lake Shore Drive Express/Local	134/135/136/143/146/147/148
Pershing	39
Pulaski	53/53A
Roosevelt	12/18
Sheridan/LaSalle	156
Sheridan/Michigan	151
S. DuSable Lake Shore Drive Express/Local	2/6/10/J14/26/28/192
South Shore/Commercial	26
State	29
Western	49/X49/49B

Downtown Corridors and Associated Routes

CORRIDORS	ROUTES
Chicago Avenue	3/26/66/125
Grand	2/29/65/66/124
Illinois	2/29/65/66/124
Wacker	2/6/125/134/135/136/146/148
Washington	19/20/J14/56/60/124/157
Madison	19/20/J14/56/60/124/157
Adams	1/7/28/126/134/135/136/151/156
Jackson	1/7/28/37/126/151

CORRIDORS	ROUTES
Clinton	7/37/60/124/125/156/157
Canal	7/37/60/124/125/157
LaSalle	134/135/136/156
Dearborn	22/24/36/62/151
State	2/6/10/29/36/62/146/147/148
Michigan	1/2/3/4/6/7/10/J14/26/28/126/143/146/147/148/151/157
Columbus	2/6/10/26/28/J14
Fairbanks	2/3/66/157

Visit [betterstreetsforbuses.com](https://betterstreetsforbuses.com) for an interactive map that lets you zoom in and leave comments.

Connect With Us! [betterstreetsforbuses.com](https://betterstreetsforbuses.com)



## Chapter 5:

# Proposed Toolbox of Street Treatments



## Proposed Toolbox of Street Treatments

CTA and CDOT are jointly developing a toolbox of street treatments to make buses faster, more reliable, more comfortable to wait for, and easier to access. The toolbox includes treatments like enhanced bus stops, dedicated bus lanes, improved traffic signals, and more.




The list of possible street treatments included here are the primary tools that CTA and CDOT may consider for future bus priority improvements. Many of the tools can and should be used in combination with others to increase their effectiveness. Each one has important considerations and trade offs that would be evaluated in the context of specific locations.

The Better Streets for Buses Plan will not assign specific street treatments to specific corridors or locations. Decisions as to what tools to use on different corridors will be informed by feedback gathered as part of the Better Streets for Buses public outreach, as well as data analysis and assessment of feasibility. Additional public and stakeholder engagement to vet any proposed designs would take place as part of a future planning phase, before any changes that would significantly affect the use of the street would be implemented. Read more about the implementation of the Better Streets for Buses Plan in the “Next Steps and Implementation” section (p.48). Analysis may also result in additional solutions not featured in the toolbox, especially as technology and street design innovation continue to evolve.

### How was the Toolbox developed?

- Reviewing other cities’ planning programs and guidance from the National Association of City Transportation Officials.
- Testing and evaluating the success of pilot projects.
- Gathering feedback from the public and stakeholders as part of other projects.

### CTA and CDOT have identified 21 tools, grouped into three toolbox sections:

-  Bus Stop Treatments
-  Bus-Friendly Streets
-  Bus-Friendly Intersections

### Connect With Us!

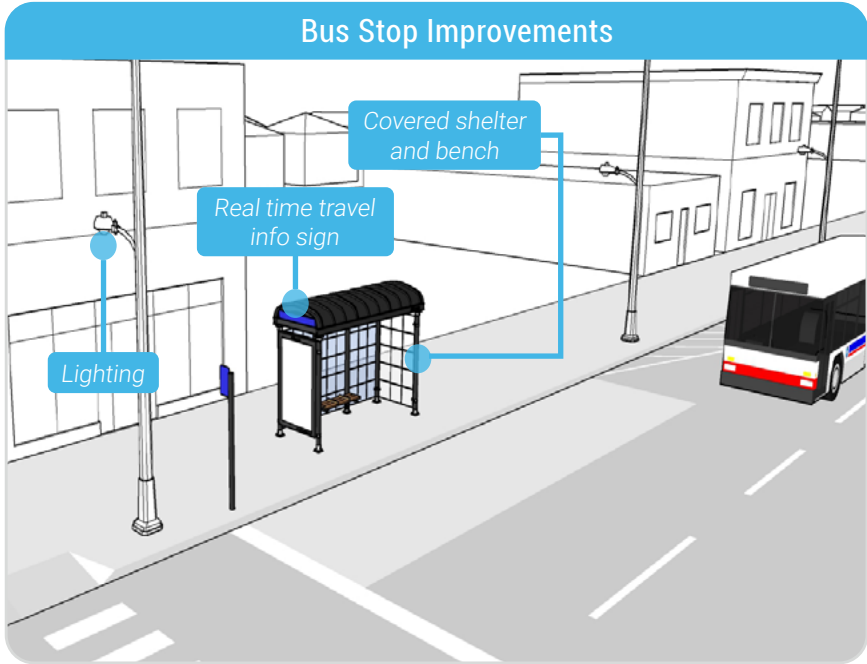
Once you’ve reviewed the Toolbox of Street Treatments, share your thoughts, questions or suggest additional ideas through our interactive website: [betterstreetsforbuses.com](https://betterstreetsforbuses.com)  
Learn about other ways to provide feedback on p.10





## What tools can help improve the experience at the bus stop?

- **Accessible Pedestrian Facilities:** A designated paved area in good condition for wheelchair access makes the bus a more viable option for riders with limited mobility.
- **Add or Improve Nearby Sidewalks and Crosswalks:** Bus stops are safer and more accessible when they connect to safe and accessible pedestrian networks, including sidewalks, well-marked crosswalks and curb ramps. Coordination of bus stop locations with opportunities to provide safe and comfortable crossings is also important.
- **Reduce Conflicts with Driveways:** Buses and motorists will encounter fewer conflicts when underutilized or duplicative driveways near bus stops are consolidated or removed. This can make the bus stop more accessible and safer for pedestrians.
- **Bus Stop Improvements:** Overhead shelter, seating, lighting and signs that track the arrival time of the next bus improve the overall bus stop experience.
- **Level or Near-Level Boarding:** Raising the height of the sidewalk and curb at a bus stop can make boarding easier because passengers do not have to step up or down as much as they would at a typical bus stop in order to get on and off. This can also improve boarding with a stroller or walker.
- **Bicycle Parking:** Providing space for people to lock their bicycles helps to expand access and provide people with options for traveling to a bus route or stop.



## Why are bus stop treatments important?

- Safer and more comfortable experiences getting to and from bus stops, waiting for the bus and boarding the bus make it a more attractive travel option, and can be especially important for older or disabled riders.
- While all CTA bus vehicles are accessible, sidewalk conditions and other factors can sometimes make for a challenging pathway to get to the bus. The bus stop is only as accessible as the area around it; nearby sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks are critical to safe access.
- Safety improvements help achieve Chicago's Vision Zero goal of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes.
- Easier and faster boarding makes overall travel time faster.

## Where are these treatments typically used?

- Improvements to pedestrian connections and facilities are used where problems have been identified; safety improvements are particularly important where crashes have occurred in the past or near higher speed streets.
- Level or near-level boarding is usually targeted at high ridership stops where many riders get on and off the bus, such as transfer points. This can also be particularly helpful in areas where a high number of riders have limited mobility.

## What are some of the other considerations?

- Level or near-level boarding usually requires rebuilding the bus stop curb and sidewalk. In addition, sufficient space for an ADA-compliant sloped transition to the higher area is needed.
- Shelters require sidewalk space and electrical connections are required for lighting and bus arrival time signage.
- Consolidating driveways is not always feasible, especially if this would limit sufficient access to the property.

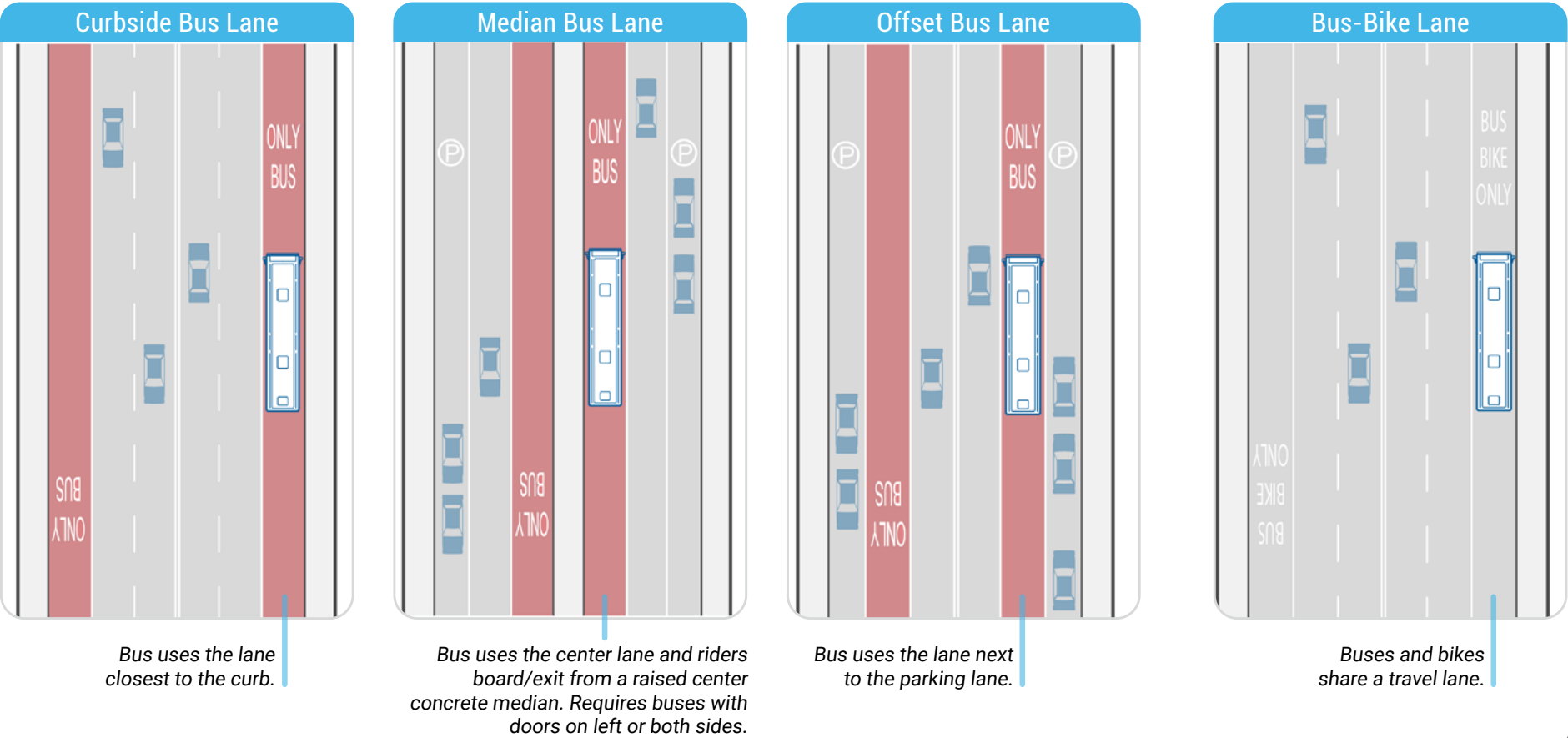




## What tools relate to bus-friendly streets?

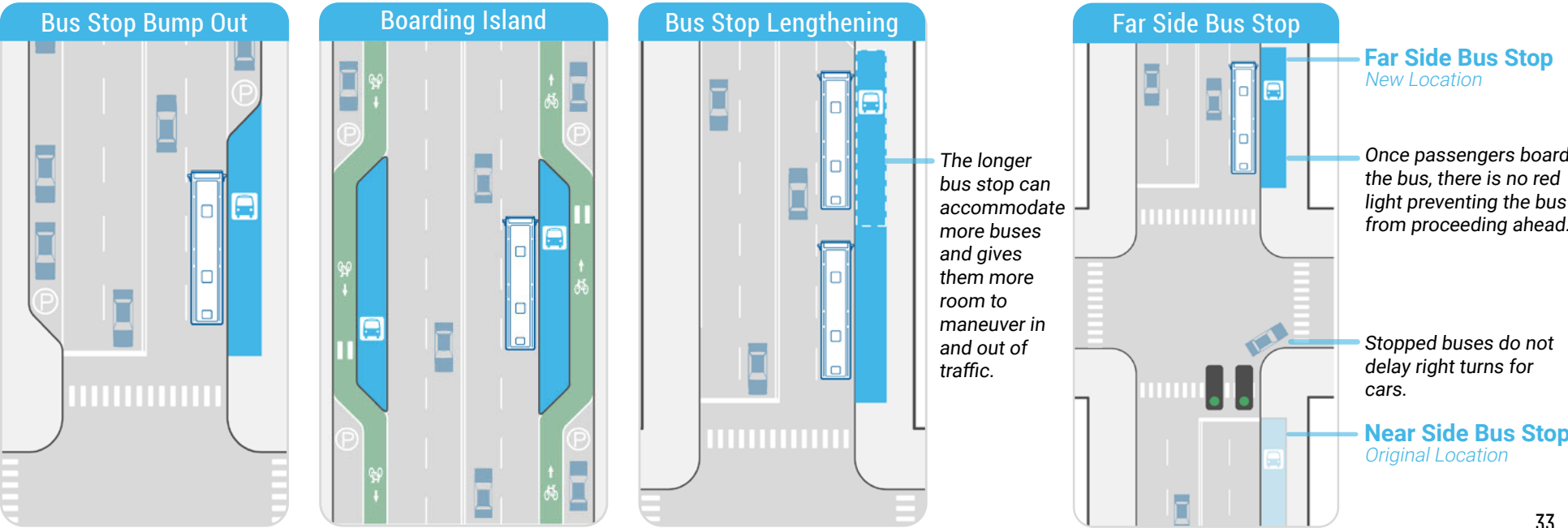
- **Bus Lane:** This is a travel lane dedicated to bus use. It can be a short or long length of a street, and can be reserved for buses at all times of day or just during specified times, such as rush hour. A bus lane can also be shared with right turn lanes near intersections.
- **Bus-Bike Lane:** This is similar to a bus-only lane, but is shared with people biking. Similar to bus-only lanes, they can be in effect at all times or just during specified times of the day or week, such as rush hour. Generally, bus-bike lanes use the curbside lane.

## Common Bus Lane Configurations



## What other tools relate to bus-friendly streets?

- **Bus Stop Bump Out:** Also called a bus bulb, this tool extends the sidewalk or boarding area into the street, typically aligning with a parking lane, which allows buses to stop in a travel lane and avoid merging out of and back into traffic.
- **Boarding Island:** Raised concrete islands, with vehicle lane(s) on one side and bike lane(s) on the other, direct bike lanes around the bus stop areas, which helps to minimize conflicts and improve safety and comfort for all users.
- **Bus Stop Lengthening:** Longer bus stops provide extra space for a bus to merge into or out of traffic. Some stops also need to be longer because they are served by longer articulated (60 foot “accordion”) buses, or multiple bus routes that can arrive at the same time.
- **Far Side Bus Stop:** At intersections with traffic signals, bus stops located on the far side of the intersection can reduce delay because they allow buses to go through an intersection at a green light before stopping to pick up/drop off passengers. Additionally, being far side increases safety for all road users, especially pedestrians, as it prevents vehicles from illegally turning right in front of a stopped bus.
- **Bus Stop Marking:** Bus stops can be clearly marked on the pavement or curb to help alert other vehicles to keep clear.
- **Bus Stop Pad:** Concrete road pads installed in the area where a bus stops are designed to better withstand the weight of buses compared to asphalt. Over time, this helps avoid bumpy pavement, which can impact buses, riders and other road users.





## Why are bus-friendly streets important?

- Dedicated lanes for buses help them avoid getting stuck in traffic congestion and help keep other vehicles clear of areas where buses need priority, like bus stops. This helps buses travel faster, stay on schedule and allows for easy boarding—making riding the bus a more reliable and attractive travel option.
- If no bus lane is present, making small adjustments to the street around bus stops can make it easier for the bus to get to the stop and then merge back into traffic, making it smoother and faster to pick up and drop off passengers, which improves overall travel time.
- Bus-friendly stops are passenger-friendly stops too! Tools that create more space for riders to wait for the bus make it easier to board with a stroller or wheelchair, provide for easier street crossings and allow bus riders to avoid conflicts with cars and bikes.
- The location of the bus stop relative to an intersection can improve how buses move through traffic.

## Where are bus-friendly street treatments typically used?

- Bus-only lanes are most effective in areas with high levels of traffic congestion. They are usually used on bus routes that run very frequently and have high ridership.
- Best practices for bus-bike lanes are being studied and monitored nationwide. CTA and CDOT will continue to learn from and apply these lessons here in Chicago.
- Tools that make it easier and faster for buses to merge in and out of traffic are most helpful on congested streets, or where access to the curb gets blocked on a regular basis.
- Boarding islands are used in conjunction with bike lanes, to reduce conflicts.
- Bump outs, boarding islands and bus stop lengthening are usually used where there is a parking lane.

### Bus Stop Markings



**Bus Stop Markings:**  
*Bus stops are usually marked with "Bus Stop" markings on the pavement to indicate that space is reserved for buses.*



### Boarding Island

Bus-Friendly Streets

## What are some of the other considerations?

- Creating bus lanes usually repurposes some space from another use, such as parking, loading zones, medians or other travel lanes.
- Bus lanes may require some turn restrictions to work well, although in some cases they can also be shared with turn lanes.
- Bus lanes help to visually distinguish the bus and make it clear that the bus has priority over general traffic—both of these factors can increase the appeal of the bus.
- Depending on the width and other uses of the street, implementation of bus lanes may mean that there would be insufficient space available for a dedicated bike facility such as a bike lane. In this case, additional signage or pavement markings to clarify where cyclists should ride may be needed.
- Some tools may improve the experience of other users. For instance, bump outs add sidewalk space for pedestrians and can shorten the length of the crosswalk.
- Bump outs can allow for more street parking compared to typical curbside bus stops.
- Near side bus stops may be better in some contexts than far side stops depending on things like the location of bus or train transfer points, driveways, light poles and landscaping.
- Because buses stay in the travel lane when stopping at a bump out (as opposed to pulling over), this tool may impact other traffic. Bump outs have the least impact on other traffic when used on streets with multiple lanes and not near traffic signals.
- Bus bump outs make it less likely that a bus stop will be blocked by a standing vehicle because the stop area is located in the travel lane.

### Curbside Bus Lane



**Curbside Bus Lane:**  
*Signs are placed roadside or overhead to communicate curbside uses and lane designations.*

### Bus Stop Bump Out



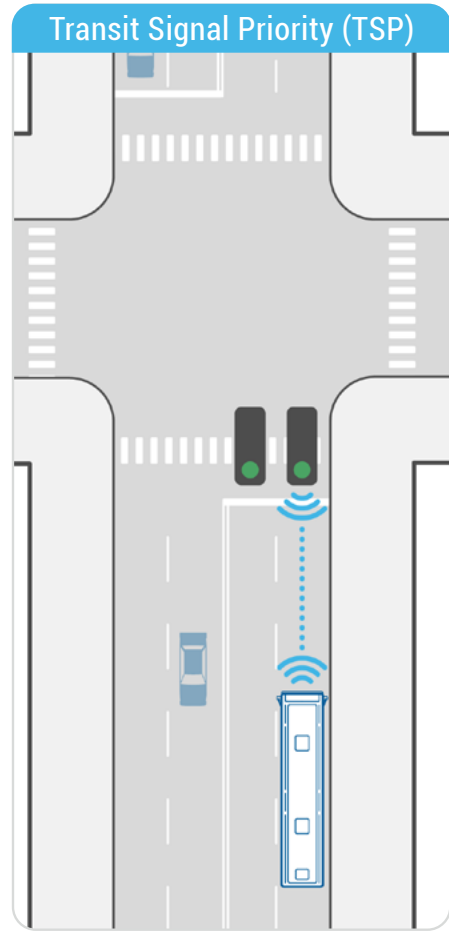
Bus-Friendly Streets



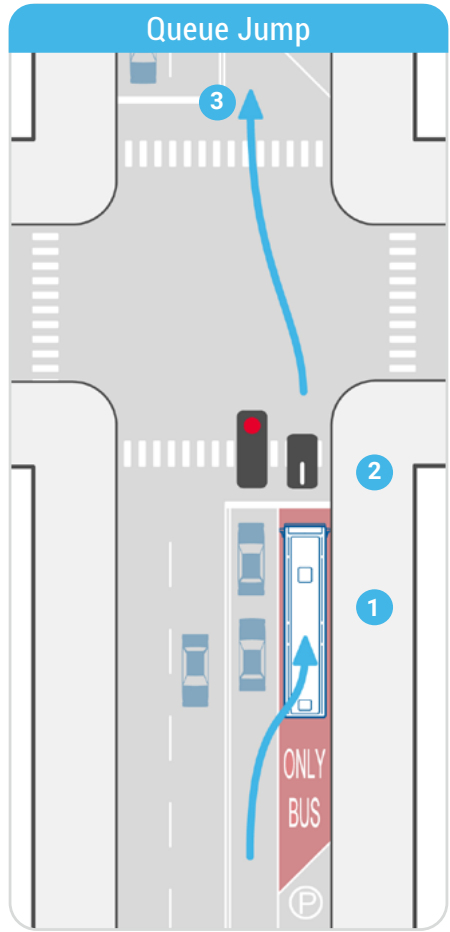


## What tools relate to bus-friendly intersections?

- **Convert Stop Sign to Traffic Signal:** In some cases, where warranted, converting a stop sign to a traffic signal can reduce the number of times buses must stop, which improves travel time and makes buses more reliable.
- **Add a Turn Arrow Signal:** At congested intersections where buses need to turn, adding a green arrow to a traffic signal can help buses avoid delays, which makes buses more reliable. A turn signal can benefit other turning traffic as well, and it can improve pedestrian safety. In some instances, it may make sense to install a bus-activated turn signal. This would mean the green arrow would only “turn on” or be lengthened when a bus is present.
- **Traffic Signal Timing:** Synchronizing traffic signals and providing more green time for streets that serve buses allows buses and general traffic to travel through a corridor more efficiently.
- **Transit Signal Priority (TSP):** An approaching bus sends a request to the traffic signal to modify light timing (for example, extending the green light for a few seconds). This tool can be programmed in a number of ways and is often triggered only when buses are behind schedule.
- **Queue Jump:** Bus-only traffic signals give buses an early “go” light to allow buses to jump ahead of waiting traffic at an intersection. These are usually paired with short sections of bus-only lanes on the near side of the intersection, so that buses can get to the “front of the line” before the light changes.



If a bus is behind schedule, it sends a message to the traffic signal to request a several extra seconds of green light time.



1. The bus enters queue jump lane to bypass general traffic.
2. Separate, bus-only signal phase gives the bus a head start at the light.
3. The bus “jumps” ahead of traffic and rejoins general traffic lane.

## Why are bus-friendly intersections important?

- Buses move faster when they don’t have to stop as often and can navigate through intersections easily. Reducing delay at intersections helps keep buses (and their riders) on schedule.

## Where are bus-friendly intersection treatments typically used?

- Transit Signal Priority is generally applied to a series of intersections along a roadway, rather than a single intersection.
- Queue jumps are sometimes used at just one intersection and sometimes as a series along a corridor. They are often used when there are near side bus stops in line with a far side parking lane. Queue jump signals can also be paired with right turn signals if a bus lane is shared with right turns for general traffic at intersections.
- Adding or extending turn arrows is most effective at intersections where turns cause significant delays, for instance where turning vehicles cause traffic to back up, or buses needing to turn often end up waiting a long time for traffic to clear.

## What are some of the other considerations?

- Adding green light time on one street usually means more red light time for the cross street, which can impact general traffic, as well as other bus routes. Similarly, adding turn arrows to a traffic signal can add time to the total cycle or take away time from other signal phases.
- Traffic signal timing must must always provide adequate time for pedestrians, including people with limited mobility, to cross.
- To accommodate a queue jump, a short bus lane is typically needed, which may reduce street parking near the intersection. Generally if there is a bus stop at an intersection where a queue jump is used, the stop should be located on the near side, so that the bus does not need to stop immediately after getting the advantage of the queue jump.



A special signal with a vertical white line tells buses to proceed through the intersection from the queue jump lane.







## Other Strategies

The tools in the proposed Better Streets for Buses Toolbox are designed to help align street infrastructure with an improved bus experience. But there are some issues that cannot be solved by changes to street infrastructure alone. There are a number of additional strategies that can benefit bus service and do not necessarily require major changes to street infrastructure, but may require investments by and/or coordination between CTA and CDOT or other city agencies.

**Expedited fare payment** strategies can help customers and buses spend less time at a stop boarding, especially at high ridership stops. This can be accomplished through “prepaid” boarding, where customers pay before boarding, usually by tapping their fare cards on a card reader located at the stop. Another strategy is “all door” boarding, which utilizes both the front and rear doors for boarding, typically with an additional card reader added to the bus near the rear door, so that customers have an additional potential entry point. CTA has piloted prepaid boarding at a number of locations and has installed permanent infrastructure for it on the westbound #77 Belmont bus at the Belmont Blue Line station. Transit agencies sometimes employ “fare checker” personnel as part of these strategies to help prevent fare evasion, although this has not been needed for CTA’s prepaid boarding deployment because card readers have been staffed. Learn more about CTA’s prepaid boarding at <https://www.transitchicago.com/prepaidboarding/>

**Bus stop spacing** is an important factor in determining travel times. When stops are spaced farther apart, the bus can move faster on average, because it stops less, but it also means some riders will have longer distances to go to reach a bus stop, which can add travel time, inconvenience, and discomfort. CTA’s current standard stop spacing is between 1/8 and 1/4 of a mile, although routes with “express” portions like those that utilize Lake Shore Drive have longer distances with few or no stops. CTA’s “X” route overlays on some corridors provide an option to travel that makes fewer stops—approximately 1/2 mile apart—while also preserving access to the local stops along the corridor via transfers to the local route.

There are also a number of aspects of **bus and roadway operations** that can impact bus service. Consistent maintenance of bus stops, roadways, sidewalks and traffic signals can make bus operations smoother and the passenger experience more comfortable. Adding resources to help manage and mitigate delays and disruptions to bus service in real time can help improve reliability. Enforcement of bus-only areas such as bus stops and designated bus lanes can make them work better; enforcement of other traffic rules to reduce double parking and blocking intersections can also prevent delays for buses.



### Chapter 6:

# Bus Priority Examples





## Completed Bus Priority Improvements

Chicago has already implemented a number of bus priority improvements on corridors in various parts of the city. Street treatments like dedicated bus lanes, expanded boarding space, transit signal priority, and queue jumps are in place at various locations. Three prime examples are described here.

### Jeffery Jump

Jeffery Jump aims to provide fast and reliable bus service along Jeffery Boulevard. In addition to dedicated rush hour bus lanes between 67th and 83rd streets, traffic signal improvements were implemented between 73rd and 84th streets, and at Anthony Avenue. Jeffery Jump stops are visually distinguishable from other stops with blue curbside markings, distinctive signage, and special shelters at key locations.

### Loop Link

Loop Link is a downtown corridor that includes bus priority elements on portions of Washington, Madison, Clinton and Canal Streets, designed to move people efficiently through the Loop on routes connecting to neighborhoods throughout the city. The many bus routes that use these streets benefit from dedicated bus lanes and queue jump bus-only traffic signals to help keep buses separate from general traffic and on schedule. Raised boarding platforms make it easier for seniors and people using wheelchairs or pushing strollers to board buses, speeding up the boarding process for everyone. The platforms also have more seating, shelter and CTA Bus Tracker signs to improve the bus rider experience. The Loop Link project also included adding dedicated space for bikes, expanded space for pedestrians, and shortened pedestrian crossing distances at some intersections.

### Bus Priority Zones (BPZs)

The goal of the Bus Priority Zones (BPZ) program is to target pinch points along major bus routes in order to speed up “bus slow zones,” which are often caused by traffic congestion, insufficient space for bus boarding, or a major intersection that creates a bottleneck. Bus Priority Zones were implemented in 2019 at several key locations on busy bus corridors, including along Chicago Avenue, 79th Street, and Western Avenue. CTA and CDOT looked at each of the slow zone segments to determine what could help reduce delays given the existing street configuration and context. Elements of specific BPZ projects included a mix of the following, depending on the location: designated bus-only lanes (all day and rush hour only), signal timing optimization, queue jump signals, sidewalk reconfigurations to expand boarding areas or shorten crossing distances, and other streetscape improvements, such as street resurfacing, improved pedestrian crossings, or concrete bus pads. Additional federal funding has been awarded through a competitive grant program to expand the BPZ program to additional corridors and locations.







## Bus Priority Improvements Coming Soon

The Better Streets for Buses Plan will lay out a comprehensive citywide framework for improving infrastructure for buses going forward, but there are a number of related efforts concurrently underway as well, to continue progress towards improving and modernizing the bus experience as the plan is developed and finalized.

### 87th Street Bus Stop and Safety Improvements

CDOT's Vision Zero program identified the 1.5 mile segment of the 87th Street corridor from Damen to Halsted as a high crash corridor, making this corridor a top priority for safety improvements. CTA and CDOT saw the potential to incorporate bus improvements as part of this project, and developed designs that include five bus boarding bulbs along the corridor. This will create more space at bus stop waiting areas and make it easier for the bus to access the stop. These bus bulbs also serve as pedestrian bump outs at intersections, shortening the crossing distance for all pedestrians and making the walk to each of these bus stops safer and more comfortable. The project also includes 14 pedestrian refuge islands that will be constructed within the next year.

### Milwaukee/Maplewood Bus and Bike Improvement

Bus boarding islands benefit both bus riders and people biking by separating the modes at a point where they typically merge. Milwaukee Avenue is an important transit and biking corridor; it is used heavily by both cyclists and also carries thousands of people on buses every day. To help provide both cyclists and bus riders with a safe and comfortable experience, a new bus boarding island is planned for the southeast-bound bus stop on Milwaukee Avenue at Maplewood Avenue. This will build on previous investments and help to alleviate an uncomfortable choke point for CTA buses, bus riders, pedestrians, and cyclists. This project is underway and will be constructed within the next year.

### Additional Bus Priority Zones

The Bus Priority Zones (BPZ) program launched in 2019 with the installation of several targeted street improvements on major bus corridors, including 79th Street, Chicago Avenue, and Western Avenue. An additional Bus Priority Zone is expected to be constructed in early 2022, on 79th Street near Columbus Drive and Kedzie Avenue. To help improve bus service, safety and traffic flow near these intersections, short stretches of red bus-only lanes along with a bus queue jump signal are planned. Also as part of this project, a cul-de-sac at Sawyer Avenue north of 79th Street is planned, to simplify intersection and expand pedestrian space. Additional funding has been secured to expand and continue the Bus Priority Zone program on other corridors. For more information on Bus Priority Zones, see p.39 or [www.transitchicago.com/newsprojects/bpz/](http://www.transitchicago.com/newsprojects/bpz/)

### South Halsted Bus Corridor Enhancement Project

Pace and CTA, in coordination with CDOT, are studying the South Halsted corridor between the Pace Harvey Transportation Center and 79th Street, including connections to the 79th and 95th/Dan Ryan Red Line stations. The goal is to identify potential bus enhancements to improve travel and shorten commutes on this key corridor. South Halsted is Pace's highest ridership corridor and was identified as a priority for implementation of premium transit services in the Pace Vision 2020 Plan. Learn more about the South Halsted project at [www.transitchicago.com/planning/southhalstedbus/](http://www.transitchicago.com/planning/southhalstedbus/) and [www.pacebus.com/pulse](http://www.pacebus.com/pulse).

### Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP)

CTA and CDOT have collaborated to install Transit Signal Prioritization (TSP) for buses along two of CTA's highest ridership corridors, Ashland and Western Avenues. Installation was completed several years ago on Ashland between Cermak Road and 95th Street, and on Western between 79th Street and Howard Street. Additional TSP installation is planned within the next two years for Ashland between Cermak Road and Irving Park Road. TSP is described in more detail on p.34.





# Bus Priority in Other Cities

Many other cities are trying out street treatments and to give bus riders greater priority. New York and San Francisco have selected a set of important bus corridors to focus on, and are using bus priority street treatments in order to systematically improve bus service citywide.

## San Francisco’s MUNI Forward

Learn more about San Francisco’s MUNI Forward at: [www.sfmta.com/projects/muni-forward](http://www.sfmta.com/projects/muni-forward)

MUNI Forward is a program launched in 2015 by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), to plan and implement a series of transit service improvements, including bus priority treatments on a network of core bus routes. SFMTA has built more than 40 miles of reliability improvements, with upgrades like red transit lanes, bus bulbs for faster boarding and traffic signals that stay green for transit. MUNI Forward corridors with bus priority treatments have seen improvements in speed and reliability, and transit riders have provided positive feedback.



San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, Near-Term Protected Bike Lanes Approach Completion on Folsom

**Boarding Islands** were added along Folsom Avenue in conjunction with protected bike lanes to provide the benefits of bus stop bump outs while also creating physical separation between bikes and faster moving traffic lanes.



SFMTA, Muni Brings Service Changes to Both Bus and Rail August 22

**Bus Stop Lengthening** in the Bayview neighborhood made room for both express and local buses at shared stops. Safety and accessibility were improved at local stops while allowing express buses to pass. In some cases, this required moving several parking spaces, but succeeded in reducing bus delays on narrow blocks that were causing congestion.

**Far Side Bus Stops** are used to reduce bus delays at traffic lights and improve pedestrian safety. Where feasible, existing bus stops are relocated to be far side.



SFMTA, Transit Bulbs: Improving Your Walk and Your Ride

**Bus Stop Bump Outs** along the Fulton Route extended the sidewalk at bus stops to allow passengers to board without having to walk between parked cars. They also provide safety benefits by reducing roadway crossing distance for pedestrians.

## New York City’s Select Bus Service

Learn more about New York City’s Select Bus Service program at: [hnew.mta.info/projects/bus-improvements](http://hnew.mta.info/projects/bus-improvements)

In 2008, New York City’s Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) partnered to initiate the Select Bus Service (SBS) program to bring bus and service improvements to high-demand corridors. The program aims to create faster, more reliable, and easily identifiable buses. Since the program began, MTA has implemented more than 111 miles of improvements throughout the city, including a combination of enhancements such as bus lanes, prepaid boarding, signal prioritization, and express stop spacing. SBS corridors have seen improvements in speed, retained riders better than most other bus routes, and surveys show rider satisfaction is generally high.



34th Street Select Bus Service  
NYCDOT and MTA New York City Transit

**Curbside and Offset Bus Lanes** (Offset shown above) were implemented on the M34/34A Routes along 34th Street in Manhattan to fix the corridor’s slow bus service and crowded sidewalks while accommodating continued population and employment growth. Improvements included bus stop bump outs, repaving and restriping, adding bus lanes along a 2-mile segment, and loading zones.



Select Bus Service on the Bx12, A BRT Partnership  
Between the NYCDOT and MTA NYC Transit

**Curbside Bus Lanes** were deployed on the Bx12 Route along Fordham Road and Pelham Parkway in the Bronx. These improvements included high visibility, all-day red bus lanes with overhead signage.



## Chapter 7:

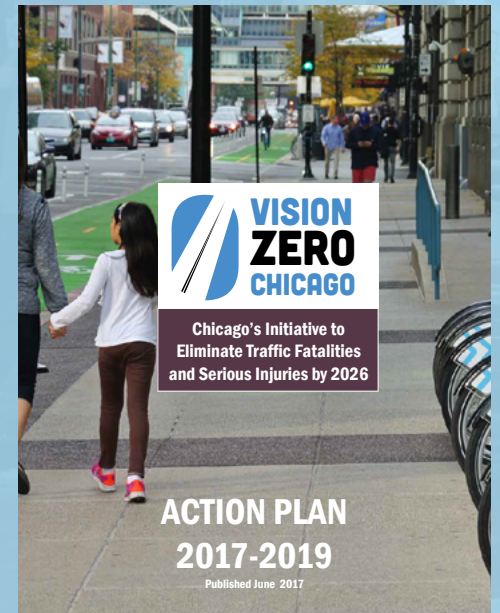
# Related Planning Efforts

## City Plans

Mayor Lori Lightfoot identified a bus prioritization network plan in her **transition report** as an important first step towards improving mobility to support all Chicagoans, and Better Streets for Buses is included as a key transit initiative in the recently published **CDOT Strategic Plan**, which sets forth a vision and specific next steps towards achieving greater equity through increased mobility justice. The **CDOT Strategic Plan** also recognizes **Vision Zero Chicago** as a core element guiding street design. Vision Zero is the commitment and approach to eliminating fatalities and serious injuries from traffic crashes impacting all roadway users. Vision Zero is especially relevant for the majority of CTA bus riders who use sidewalks and cross streets to reach CTA bus stops. A commitment to safer streets is a commitment to a better CTA bus experience. Since taking office, the Lightfoot administration launched **INVEST South/West** to revitalize ten historic neighborhoods on Chicago's South and West sides, including through transportation infrastructure investments.

The proposed Better Streets for Buses network includes corridors in all ten Invest South/West neighborhoods, and public comment will inform a final set of corridors, as well as priorities for specific locations and improvements. This can then help guide coordination between CTA, CDOT, and the Department of Planning and Development for bus improvement investments in these areas.

Because of the importance of transit in reducing climate changing emissions, completing a Better Streets for Buses Plan was also one of the commitments made by the City of Chicago for the **Bloomberg American Cities Climate Challenge**, and its development can inform additional climate related efforts that the City is undertaking as part of its forthcoming **Climate Action Plan**.





# Regional Plans

The completion of a Better Streets for Buses Plan will also support goals and priorities highlighted in other regional plans. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s latest plan for the region, **ON TO 2050**, sets a target of doubling transit ridership. ON TO 2050 notes that to accomplish this, transit must provide fast, frequent, reliable, and affordable service, and that bus priority investments are particularly cost-effective ways to improve transit service.

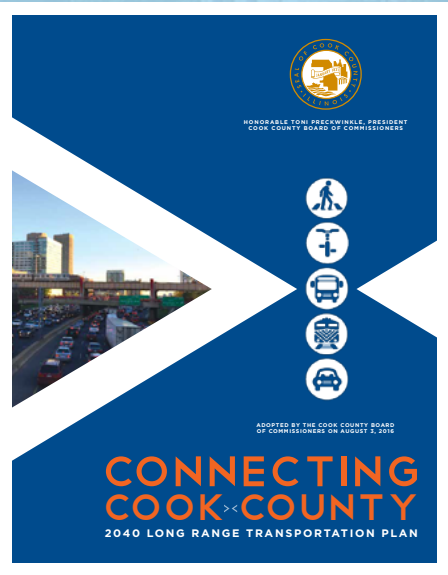
Aligned with that, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) recently completed a strategic plan, **Invest in Transit**, which identified the need for bus priority improvements to help the region’s transit system build on its existing strengths and stay competitive. Cook County completed a long rang transportation plan in 2016, **Connecting Cook County**, which identified transit as a top priority, and recommended considering changes to street design and signals to improve bus performance. Building on this plan, Cook County is in the process of developing a more detailed transit plan with goals that include increasing overall transit ridership and focusing on the needs of transit reliant communities.



Regional Transit Authority



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



Cook County

# Concurrent Bus Improvement Initiatives

The Better Streets for Buses Plan will lay out a comprehensive citywide framework for improving infrastructure for buses going forward, but there are a number of other efforts concurrently underway as well, to make progress towards improving and modernizing the bus experience as the plan is developed and finalized. These include:

- **Comprehensive Analysis of Bus Service:**  
CTA is also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of bus service and operations in the context of changes to population, employment, land use, and travel patterns over the last decade. This will look at how current bus service—things like routing, frequency, span of service, and stop spacing—affect the usefulness of the transit network throughout the CTA service area.
- **Electric Buses:**  
CTA recently added six new electric buses to its fleet, and plans to add 17 more in the near future. CTA is also studying strategies for scaling up to convert the full fleet of more than 1,800 buses to electric vehicles by by 2040. This planning study will develop a roadmap to guide bus replacement, charging infrastructure installation, garage facility upgrades, and electric bus operations and maintenance. This study also includes analysis of where electric bus deployment can deliver the greatest benefits to communities most vulnerable to, and adversely affected by, the health impacts of vehicle emissions. Learn more about CTA’s bus electrification at [www.transitchicago.com/electricbus/](http://www.transitchicago.com/electricbus/)





## Chapter 8:

# Next Steps and Implementation

## Next Steps and Implementation

CDOT and CTA are seeking comment on this draft Better Streets for Buses Plan generally, and in particular on the proposed network and toolkit, through the outreach effort and tools outlined. After the initial phase of public outreach concludes, and feedback is synthesized, a refined version of the Better Streets for Buses Plan will be presented through additional outreach communications and events, and then finalized.

Implementation of the Better Streets for Buses Plan will be shaped by the public feedback we receive. Your thoughts, ideas, and values will shape how CTA and CDOT approach project implementation, both in terms of where changes should be made first, and what the priority changes for each community may be. Equity considerations will have a primary role in determining how resources are directed.

Implementation will not look the same on every corridor, and may even differ along segments of a single corridor—depending on the uses of the street, and the goals and needs of the communities located along the corridor. A given street could see signal improvements in one segment, short stretches of bus lane in another, enhanced bus stops in another, and no changes to yet another. CTA and CDOT have utilized local, state, and federal resources for bus priority projects in the past, and will continue to identify resources and develop short and long-term pathways for Better Streets for Buses implementation.





**CDOT**

Chicago Department  
of Transportation